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Sakhi Sarwar

A FOLKTALE FROM PUNJAB



The folktales of a country reflect the spirit of its rural life. They are simple but yet not entirely devoid of art.

For dramatic effect, the bards who sing the folktales often turn history and geography upside down. Two kings who lived two hundred years apart become contemporaries and are made blood brothers. A well-known bridge across one river is shifted to a completely different stream.

The folktales of the Punjab, including the regions now in Pakistan, also have this interesting aspect—a delightful blend of Hindu-Muslim traditions. A Muslim governor sends a wedding proposal through a Brahmana; a Hindu saint invokes God with the word 'Rab'; a Muslim bride wears the vermillion powder on her forehead—an essentially Hindu custom.

Darkness has fallen. As the moon rises silently over the Indus and the Ravi, over the huts and the fields of long-eared wheat, the peasants gather round the bard. The bard tunes his instrument and begins to sing...

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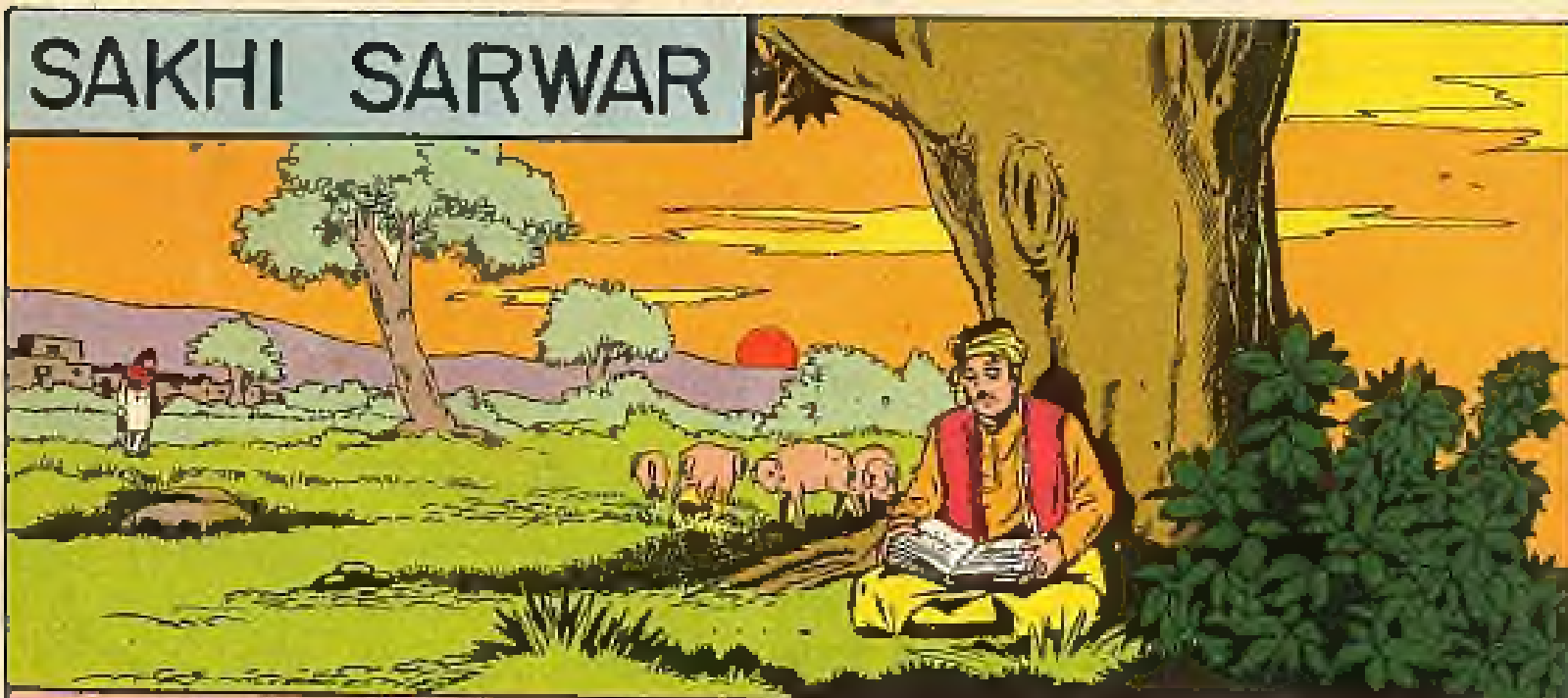
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Editor : Anant Pai Script: Gayatri Madan Dutt

Artworks: Dilip Kadam

SAKHI SARWAR



ABOUT TWELVE MILES FROM MULTAN LIES THE VILLAGE OF GARN KOT. HERE LIVED SAYYID AHMED, OR SAKHI SARWAR, WITH HIS MOTHER, HIS FATHER AND HIS THREE STEP-BROTHERS. PIOUS AND GENEROUS, HE WAS CONSIDERED A SAINT.



SO THERE YOU ARE. I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU. DON'T YOU KNOW IT IS EVENING?



EVENING? FORGIVE ME, MOTHER. I WAS READING.

THE SHEEP ARE ABOUT TO GO TO SLEEP AND YOU ARE STILL READING.



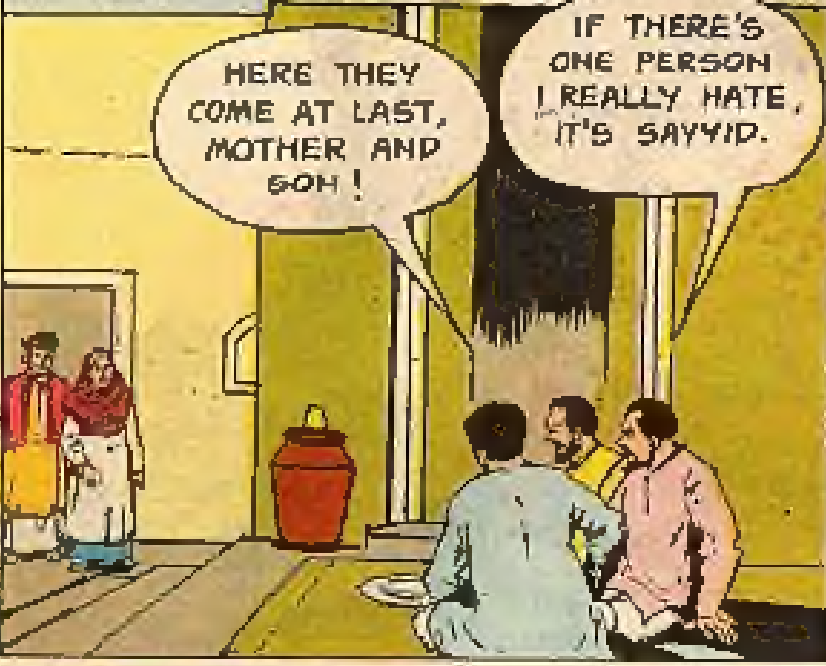
THE HOLY QURAN ASSORBS ME COMPLETELY, MOTHER. IT IS GOD'S WORD. I BOW TO HIM.

MAY ALLAH BLESS YOU, FOR YOUR DEVOTION. COME, LET'S GO HOME.



ARRRR...
RRRR...

AT HOME —



HERE THEY COME AT LAST, MOTHER AND SON!

IF THERE'S ONE PERSON I REALLY HATE, IT'S SAYYID.



PLEASE FORGIVE ME. I WISH YOU HADN'T WAITED FOR ME.

EAT, MY SONS. I'LL SERVE YOU.



NO, MOTHER, THAT'S ENOUGH FOR ME. MY BROTHERS HAVE HEALTHY APPETITES. LET THEM HAVE MORE.



THAT'S FINE BY US.

IF HE WANTS TO STARVE, LET HIM STARVE.

ONE DAY —



OH, SAYYID, YOUR GRANDFATHER IS DEAD, O WOEFUL DAY THAT TOOK MY BELOVED FATHER FROM ME.

DO NOT WEEP, MOTHER. IT IS TO ALLAH'S KINGDOM HE HAS GONE.

SO SAYYID'S RICH GRANDFATHER
IS DEAD! GOOD! IS THERE
ANYTHING IN IT FOR US?

FOR US? IT'S
HIS MOTHER'S
FATHER WHO IS
DEAD, NOT OURS!
WE HAVE NO RIGHT
TO ANYTHING.
DO WE?



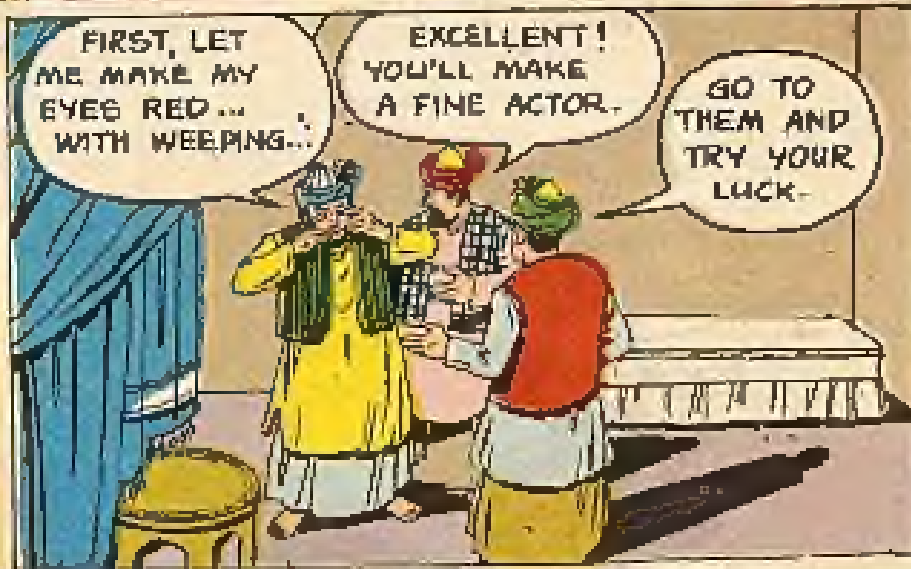
SAYYID IS
A FOOL. I DON'T
MIND BECOMING
RICH AT HIS
EXPENSE!



FIRST, LET
ME MAKE MY
EYES RED...
WITH WEeping...

EXCELLENT!
YOU'LL MAKE
A FINE ACTOR.

GO TO
THEM AND
TRY YOUR
LUCK.



SAYYID, MOTHER
...WHAT A SAD
DAY THIS IS...MY
HEART BREAKS
WITH SORROW....



BUT WHAT MAKES
ME EVEN SADDER
IS THAT SAYYID WILL
SOON BE FAR
FROM US...

I? FAR
FROM YOU,
MY DEAR
BROTHER...?



YOU WILL NOW OWN
YOUR GRANDFATHER'S
VAST LANDS AND... YOU
WILL FORGET YOUR POOR
BROTHERS WHO LOVE
YOU SO MUCH.

HOW CAN YOU
SAY SUCH A
THING? ALL THAT
IS MINE IS YOURS.

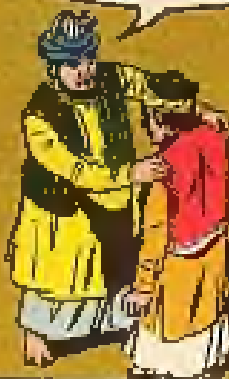
AHA! I'VE
GOT HIM!



YOU WERE ALWAYS GENEROUS,
SAYYID. I KNOW YOU WILL
SHARE YOUR PROSPERITY WITH
US. BUT YOU KNOW SO LITTLE
ABOUT THESE THINGS... IF... IF
YOU LET ME DIVIDE
THE LAND...

CERTAINLY! TAKE IT
ALL. YOU DO THE
ALLOTING. I KNOW
I CAN TRUST YOU.

MAY YOU LIVE
LONG! MAY ALLAH
ALWAYS PROTECT
YOU!



SOON —

I AM THE
ELDEST, THIS
PLOT IS MINE!

NO, IT'S
MINE...

I CHOSE
IT FIRST!



BROTHERS,
BROTHERS! LET'S
NOT QUARREL! WE
HAVE CHOSEN THE MOST
BARREN STRIP OF LAND
FOR SAYYID. DOESN'T
THAT SATISFY YOU?

OH, YES,
YES...

WE'LL BE
HAPPY WITH
OUR SHARE.

A LITTLE LATER —

HAVE YOU
DIVIDED
THE LAND,
MY BROTHER?

YES, SAYYID.
THAT BEAUTI-
FUL PLOT
THERE IS
FOR YOU.

YOU SEEM TO
HAVE GIVEN ME A
VERY FERTILE STRIP.
I HOPE YOU HAVE
BEEN FAIR TO
YOURSELVES.

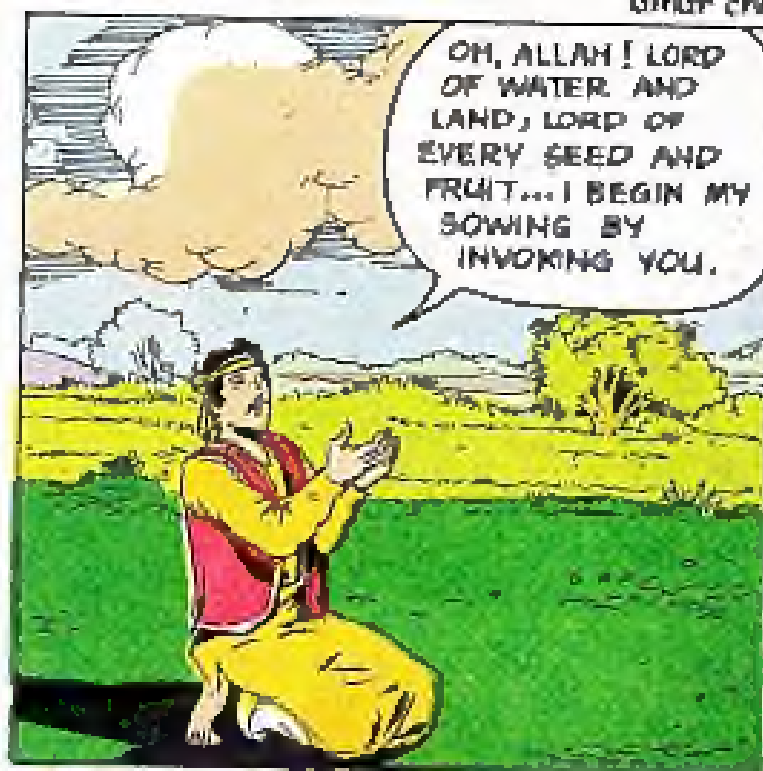
THE FOOL
DOESN'T KNOW
A THING ABOUT
AGRICULTURE!

IN THE SOWING SEASON —

THERE'S SAYYID,
PRAYING AS USUAL!
PRAY AWAY, STEP-BROTHER.
YOU WILL BE LUCKY
IF YOU GET EVEN A
HARVEST OF THORNS.

HA, HA,
HA!

HO, HO,
HO!

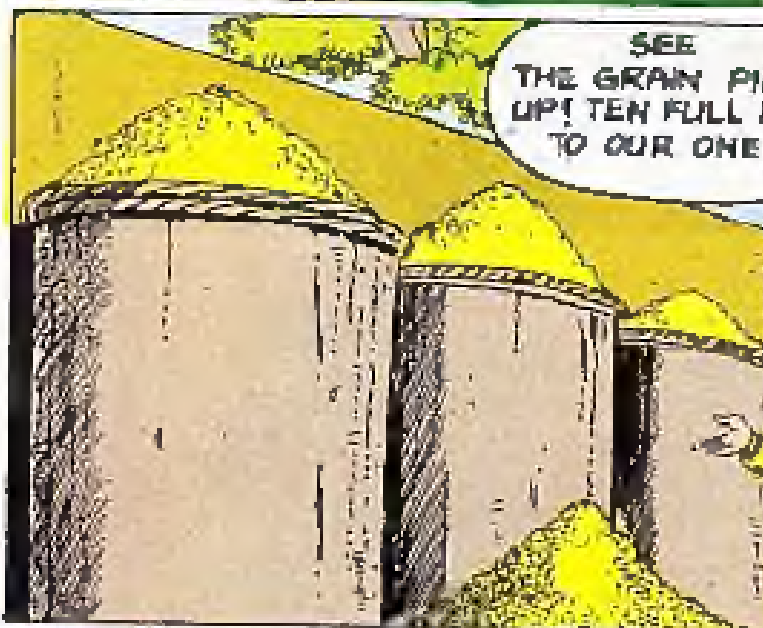


OH, ALLAH! LORD OF WATER AND LAND, LORD OF EVERY SEED AND FRUIT... I BEGIN MY SOWING BY INVOKING YOU.



AND AS THE RAIN AND THE SUN RIPENED THE CROPS—

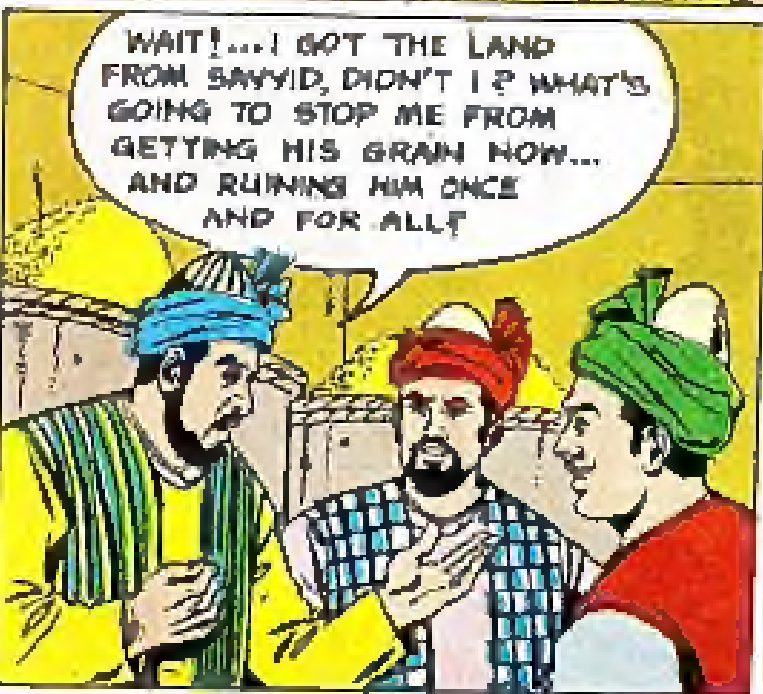
LOOK AT SAYYID'S PLOT. I... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!



SEE THE GRAIN PILED UP! TEN FULL BINS TO OUR ONE!

IT'S YOUR FAULT...

YOU ALLOTTED THE LAND...



WAIT!... I GOT THE LAND FROM SAYYID, DIDN'T I? WHAT'S GOING TO STOP ME FROM GETTING HIS GRAIN NOW... AND RUINING HIM ONCE AND FOR ALL?

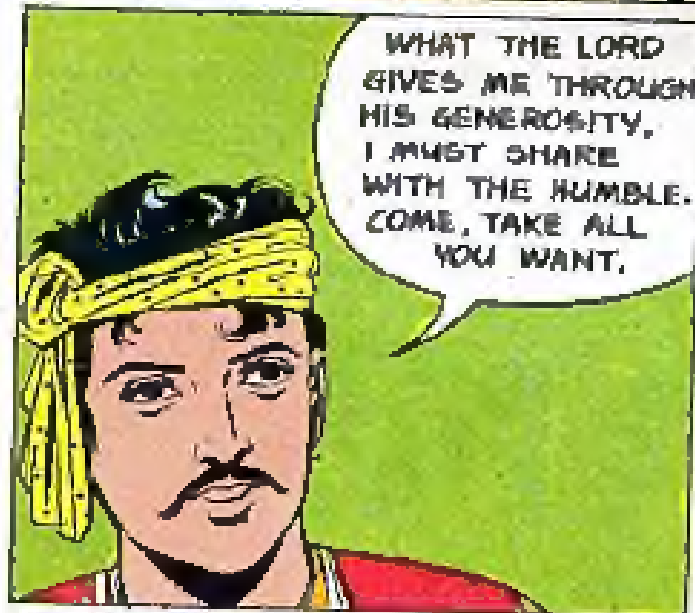


SOON —

SAYYID, WE ARE LOST! OH, WE ARE LOST! OUR CROP WAS A FAILURE...

WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SHOW OUR FACES IN THE TOWN.





FRIENDS SAYHI
SAYYID'S GRAIN IS
EXHAUSTED YOU MAY
ALL LEAVE

WHAT A BRILLIANT
IDEA THAT WAS I
SAYYID IS SOON GOING TO
BE IN TROUBLE

HE
WILL HAVE TO
RUN AWAY OR
ROT IN PRISON

A FEW DAYS LATER

WE HAVE ALMOST
REACHED MULHAN

AND LOOK AT
SAYYID, RIDING
ALONG SO INNOCENTLY.
LET'S BREAK IT TO
HIM NOW.

EE SAYYID, I HOPE
YOU HAVE BRUGHT
ENOUGH MONEY
WITH YOU.

WHAT
FOR,
BROTHER?

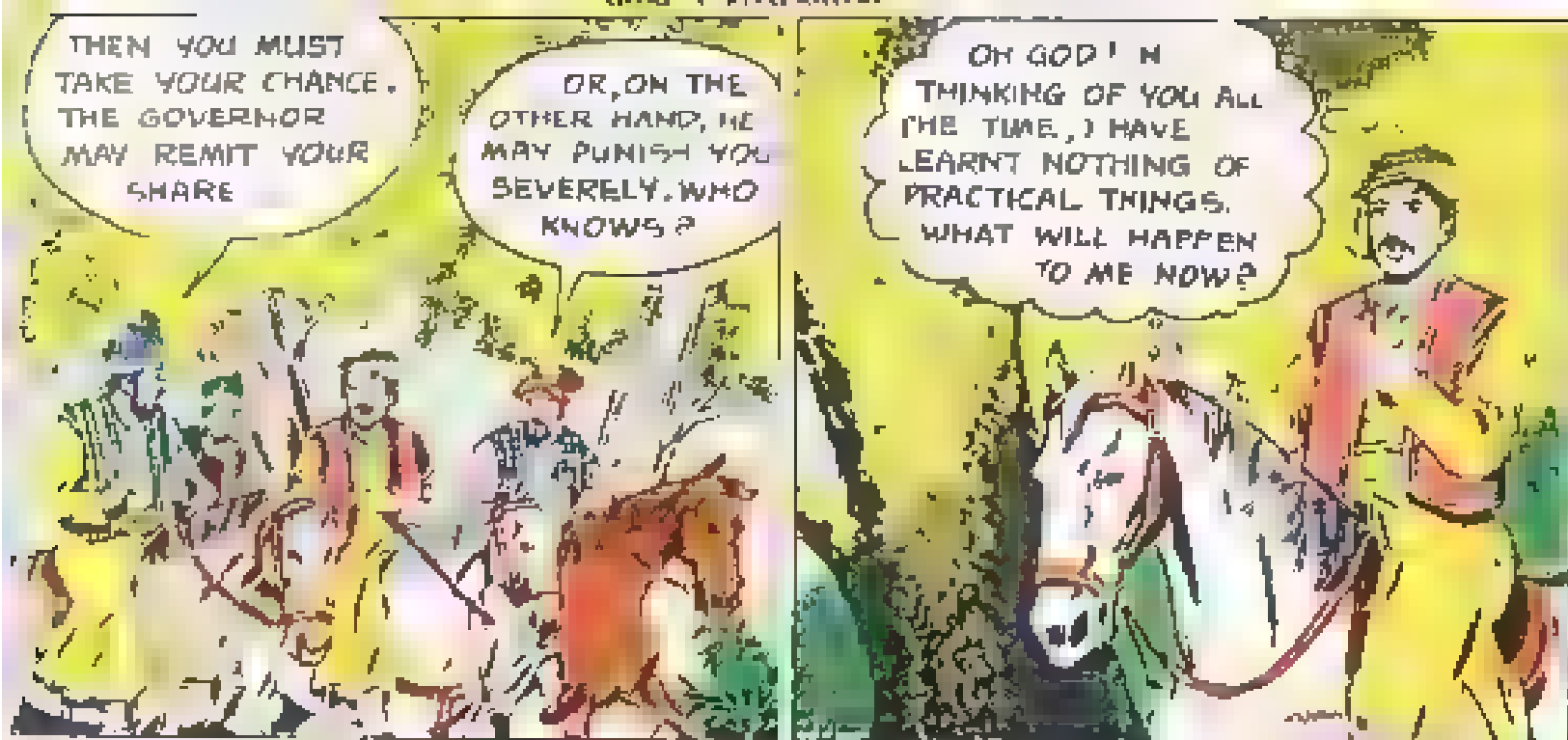
MY DEAR FELLOW (XD)
YOU THINK WE ARE GOING
TO MULHAN FOR FUN? YOU
WILL HAVE TO PAY THE
GOVERNMENT WIND TAX &
PART OF THE EARNINGS
FROM YOUR HARVEST

BUT
DIDN'T KNOW
THERE WAS
SUCH A LAW
I HAVE NOTHING
WITH ME

THEN YOU MUST
TAKE YOUR CHANCE.
THE GOVERNOR
MAY REMIT YOUR
SHARE

OR, ON THE
OTHER HAND, HE
MAY PUNISH YOU
SEVERELY. WHO
KNOWS?

OH GOD! I'M
THINKING OF YOU ALL
THE TIME, I HAVE
LEARN'T NOTHING OF
PRACTICAL THINGS.
WHAT WILL HAPPEN
TO ME NOW?



AND SUDDENLY

DO YOU SEE
THOSE PEOPLE?
WHERE DID THEY
SPRING FROM?

MORE AND MORE ARE
JOINING THEM AND THEY
ALL SEEM TO BE
FOLLOWING SAYYID



THIS IS
RIDICULOUS! THEY
HAVE BLOCKED
THE STREETS!

I FEEL SUFFOCATED!
CAN'T BREATHE!



MEANWHILE, AT THE HOUSE OF GHANU,
THE GOVERNOR OF MULTAN --

WHAT'S GOING
ON DOWN
THERE?

I'VE NEVER
SEEN SUCH
A THROG
BEFORE

GO --GO
QUICKLY I SEE
WHAT'S HAPPENING--
ALERT OUR
ARMY...

HALT! WHO ARE
YOU? WHAT IS
YOUR BUSINESS
IN THIS CITY?

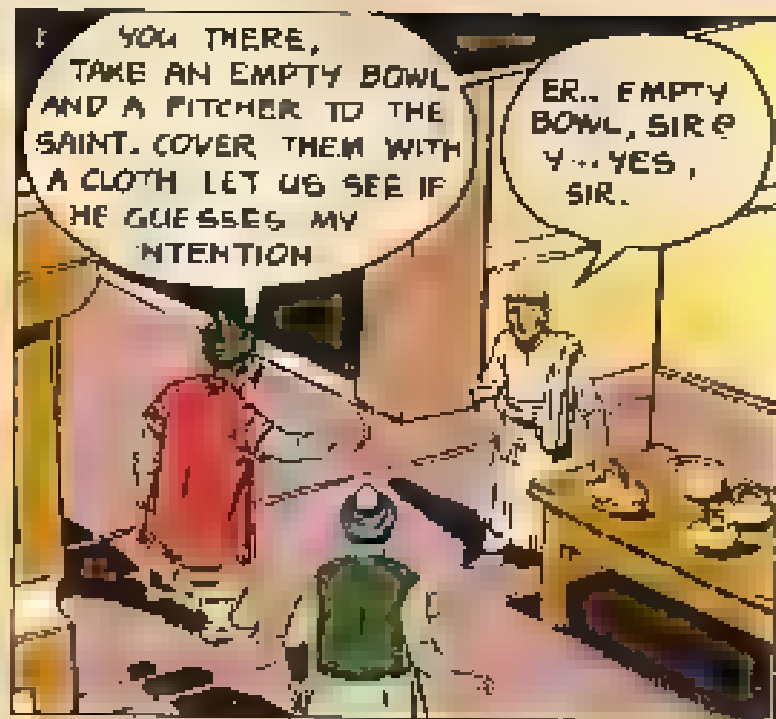
SIR, WE ARE
FOLLOWERS OF THE
SAINT, SAKHI SARWAR.

HE MUST BE A
TRULY GREAT SAINT
TO HAVE SUCH A
MULTITUDE OF
FOLLOWERS

SIR, SIR YOU
WON'T NEED YOUR
SWORD. IT'S ONLY
A SAINT WHO IS
VISITING MULTAN
WITH HIS
FOLLOWERS



OHO! A SAINT,
IS HE? LET ME
TEST THE POWERS
OF THIS MAN
OF GOD



YOU THERE,
TAKE AN EMPTY BOWL
AND A PITCHER TO THE
SAINT. COVER THEM WITH
A CLOTH LET US SEE IF
HE GUESSES MY
INTENTION

ER.. EMPTY
BOWL, SIR?
Y.. YES,
SIR.



THIS WILL SEEM
LIKE AN INSULT TO THE
SAINT. HE MIGHT EVEN
BE ANGRY WITH ME,
BELIEVING THIS TO
BE MY OFFERING



OH GOD, I AM A
POOR, HUMBLE
SERVANT. PROTECT
ME... HELP ME

I WILL
SECRETLY
WATCH
THEM



O O . SAINT, THIS HAS BEEN
SENT TO YOU WITH THE
RESPECTS OF GHANU,
GOVERNOR OF MULTAN.

THAT IS
KIND OF
HIM

WH WHAT'S
THIS P!

AH! REFRESHING
RICE AND MILK AND
CLEAR, COOL WATER!
I WILL HAVE A LITTLE.
TAKE BACK THE
REST



MMMM. I CAN GUESS WHAT
HAS HAPPENED. O ALLAH,
YOU ANSWER THE PRAYERS
OF ALL — EVEN THOSE OF
A HUMBLE SERVANT

HE IS EATING
SOMETHING I
AM AM
I SEEING
RIGHT P



SOON

HERE, S R
THE SAINT HAS
SENT THIS
BACK

THE EMPTY
VESSELS ARE
FILLED TO THE BRIM
HE IS INDEED
A TRUE SAINT!



GO—INVITE THE
NOBLE ONE INTO
THE HOUSE

O SAINT ACCEPT FROM ME
THIS PURSE OF A LAKH AND
A QUARTER RUPEES, A
HOUSE AND ROBES OF
HONOUR

I THANK
YOU SIR



I HAVE LEARNT FROM
YOUR FOLLOWERS WHY
YOU CAME HERE. I SUSPECT
YOUR THREE BROTHERS
OF TREACHERY.



GUARDS THROW
THEM INTO PRISON
AT ONCE!



LATER —

THERE GOES
THE SAINT
BACK TO HIS
HOMETOWN

BUT HE'S TAKING
THE WRONG ROAD
HE'S GOING TOWARDS
THE TOWN PRISON!



O WARDEN, MY BROTHERS ARE HERE IN YOUR PRISON. I REQUEST YOU TO RELEASE THEM

YOU STILL LOVE THEM! IN SPITE OF THEIR WICKEDNESS! I WON'T REFUSE YOU. HERE ARE THE KEYS - RELEASE THE ONES THAT ARE YOUR BROTHERS

ALL OF THEM ARE MY BROTHERS. I WILL NOT MOVE FROM HERE TILL THEY ARE ALL RELEASED.

I HAD BETTER TELL THE GOVERNOR TO COME AND SEE ABOUT THIS HIMSELF

SOON -

YES, WARDEN. LET THEM ALL GO WHEN THE SAINT HIMSELF HAS DEMANDED THEIR RELEASE. WHAT CAN I SAY IF THEY ARE ALL PARDONED



COME HERE, ALL OF
YOU CALL YOUR OTHER
FRIENDS TOO

WE ASSURE YOU GREAT
SANT, EVERY COIN IN THIS
BAG WILL BE USED TO FEED
AND CLOTHE THE POOR
OF THIS TOWN



A LAKH AND
A QUARTER
RUPEES

ALL GONE



AND LATER ON THE WAY HOME

LOOK! HUNDREDS
OF BEDRAGGLED
FELLOWS! THEY'RE
COMING THIS WAY!



WHO
ARE
YOU?

WE ARE FAKIRS SIR -
THREE HUNDRED AND
SIXTY OF US WE HAVE
JUST BROKEN A TWELVE-
YEAR LONG FAST NOW
HUNGER DRIVES US
TO THE CITY.



TWELVE YEARS!
NO WONDER
THEY LOOK LIKE
RUNAWAY
SCARECROWS!

THESE ARE
DEVOUT MEN OF
GOD. I SEE DIVINE
HUNGER IN THEIR
EYES



ALL MY BROTHERS
EAT THEM, AND
FOR THE OTHERS
I'LL SELL THEM IN
MILTAN FOR FOOD.

AND WHO AM
I GOING TO SELL BY
ONE? I'LL TAKE
THEIR OWN MONEY
AND SELL THEM

AND I'LL TAKE THE
MONEY AND
SELL THEM IN
MILTAN

YOU ARE BARE
WHERE YOU STARTED
SAYYID. YOU HAVE
PARTED WITH TRULY
VALUABLE GIFTS

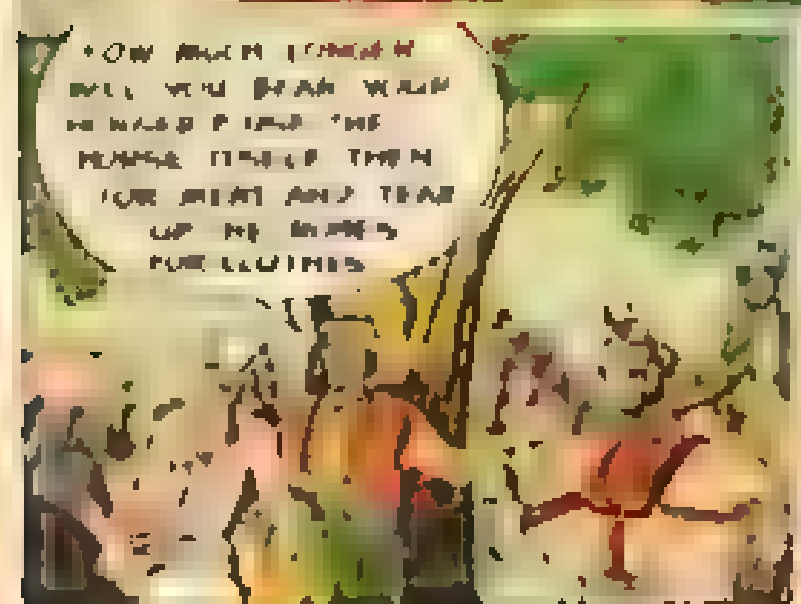
THEY WERE ON
NE NEARLY AND
USELESS TO ME
THE BROTHERS WILL
MAKE MUCH
USE OF THEM



WELL ONE
HOBLE ONE! STOP!
TAKE BACK YOUR
KIND GIFTS



NO ONE IN MILTAN WANTS
TO BUY THEM FOR THEY
SAY THEY FEAR THE
GIVER WHO GAVE
THEM TO YOU.

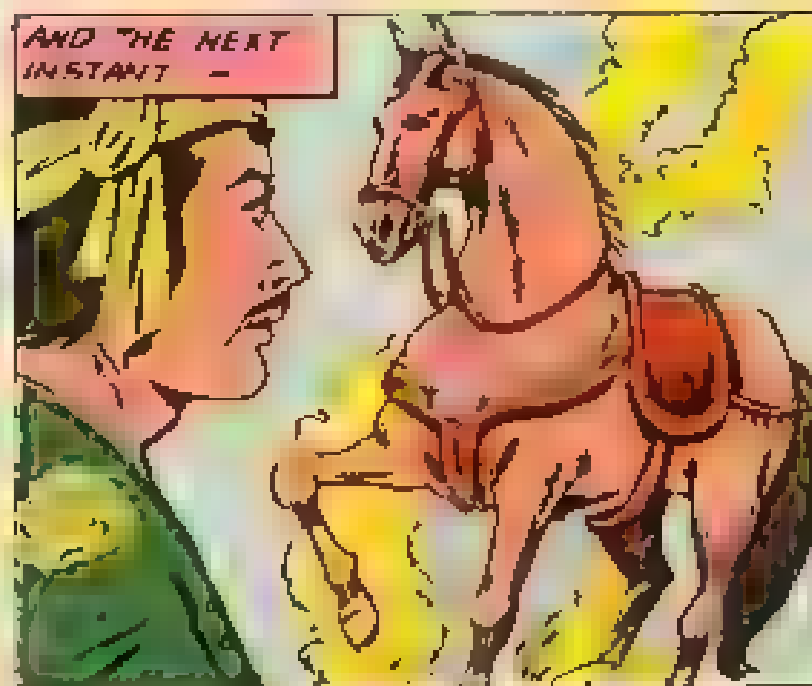
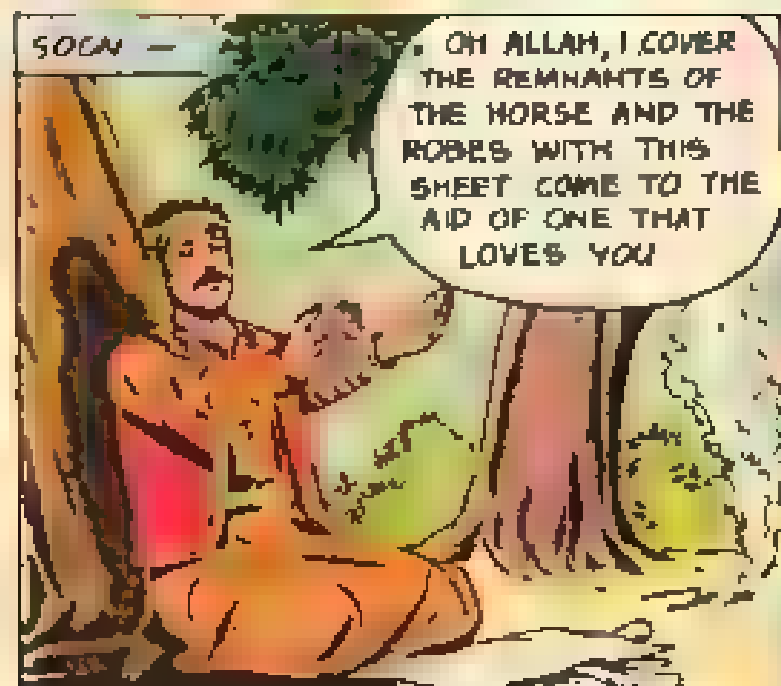
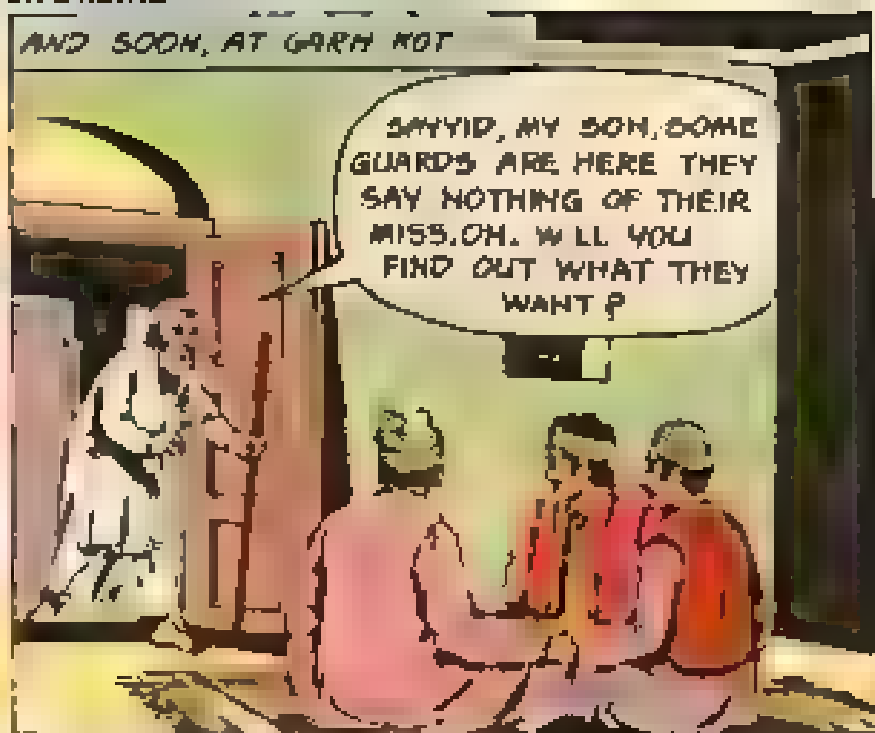


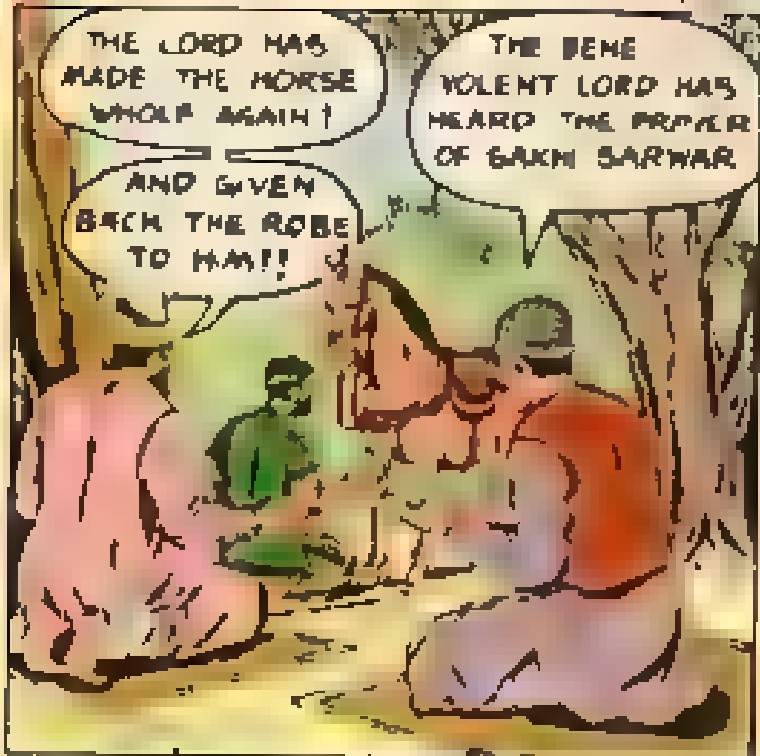
HOW MUCH LONGER
WILL YOU BEAR WITH
ME HAVING THE
PEOPLE ITSELF THEN
FOR MEAT AND TEAR
UP MY BROTHERS
FOR CLOTHES



NO JOY IS GREATER
THAN TO SEE HUNGRY
MOUTHS BREAK INTO
SMILES. DON'T YOU AGREE,
MY BROTHERS?







THE LORD HAS
MADE THE HORSE
WHOLE AGAIN!

AND GIVEN
BACK THE ROBE
TO HIM!!

THE BENE
VOLENT LORD HAS
HEARD THE PRAYER
OF BAKH SARWAR



COME, LET US
GO TO MULTAN AND
RETURN THE GIFTS
PERSONALLY.



AT MULTAN

OH... NO... IT'S THE SAINT HIMSELF!
HE... HE RIDES THE SAME HORSE
AND WEARS THE SAME ROBES... OH!
THOSE VILLAINOUS BROTHERS! I'LL
MURDER THEM.. I'LL BOIL THEM
IN OIL.. I'LL ROAST THEM ON
A SPIT!



GREAT ONE
NOBLE ONE . O MOST
BELOVED OF GOD
I BEG YOUR
FORGIVENESS



I HAVE ERRED PROVE
THAT YOU FORGIVE ME!
ACCEPT THE HAND OF
MY DAUGHTER IN
MARRIAGE, I BESEECH
YOU!



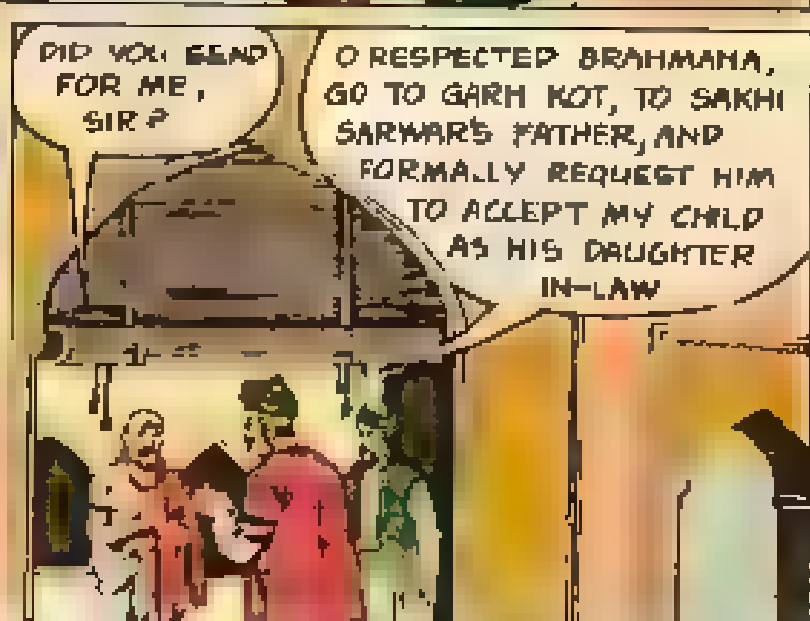
YOUR DAUGHTER HAS GROWN UP IN WEALTH. WHAT CAN I, A POOR FAKIR, OFFER HER? NO. I REFUSE HER HAND. KEEP YOUR HORSE AND ROBES TOO AND GOD BE WITH YOU.

BUT KIND SAINT
GOOD SAINT
WAIT



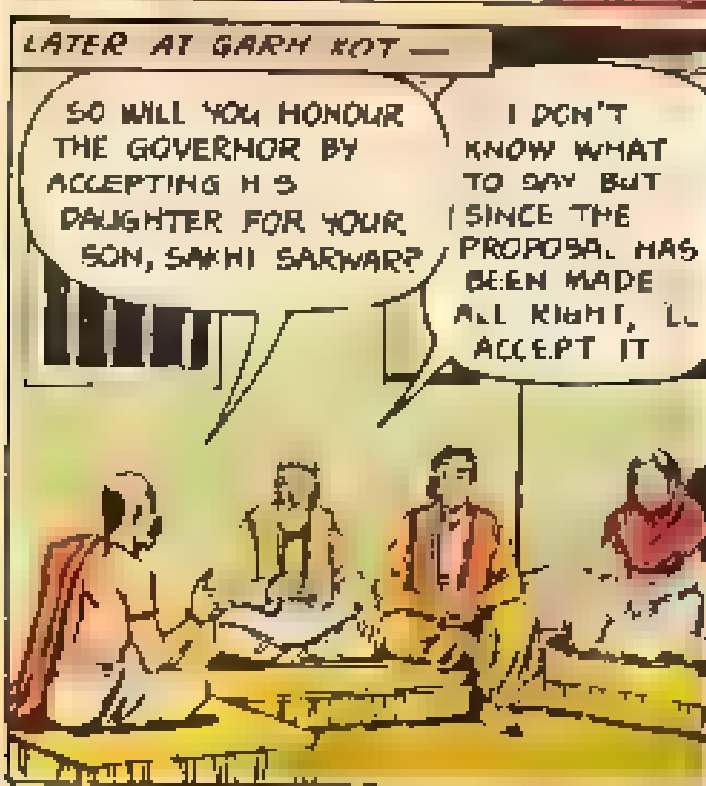
HE'S GONE! BUT I WON'T GIVE UP. SUMMON A BRAHMANA AT ONCE!

YES, SIR



DID YOU SEND FOR ME, SIR?

O RESPECTED BRAHMANA, GO TO GARN KOT, TO SAKHI SARWAR'S FATHER, AND FORMALLY REQUEST HIM TO ACCEPT MY CHILD AS HIS DAUGHTER IN-LAW.



SO WILL YOU HONOUR THE GOVERNOR BY ACCEPTING HIS DAUGHTER FOR YOUR SON, SAKHI SARWAR?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY BUT SINCE THE PROPOSAL HAS BEEN MADE ALL RIGHT, I ACCEPT IT.



WHAT DO YOU SAY, SAYYID?

IF YOU WANT ME TO MARRY, THEN I AM AGREEABLE.

AND SOON AT GHANU'S -

THE WEDDING
IS FIXED! AHA! IT
WILL BE A WEDDING
THAT NO ONE IN
MULTAN HAS SEEN
THE LIKE OF!

INSTRUCT THE
INNKEEPERS AND
CONFECTIONERS
THAT ALL FOOD
BOUGHT BY ANY-
ONE IN MULTAN,
SHOULD BE
CHARGED TO ME.

THE VERY SAINTS AND GODS
SHALL ATTEND THE WEDDING.
SEND OUT INVITATIONS TO ALL,
EVEN THOSE VILLAINOUS
BROTHERS! TWENTY FIVE
THOUSAND SHALL BE FED
AT THE FEAST.



AND ON THE WEDDING DAY —

HERE COMES THE BRIDEGROOM

I WAS AFRAID THE PROCESSION WOULD CONSIST OF THE SAINT'S RAGGED, FAKIR FRIENDS. BUT SEE, SAKHI SARWAR HAS BROUGHT A DECENT, WELL-DRESSED CROWD. MY PRESTIGE WILL NOT BE LOWERED AFTER ALL

THE HOLY BHAIRON AND THE HOLY HANWANT THEMSELVES ARE PROVIDING THE MUSIC TO USHER THE BRIDEGROOM INTO HIS FATHER-IN-LAW'S CITY

BUT JUST THEN —

ALL IS LOST!
ALL IS LOST,
O HONOURED ONE!
O WOE! O MISFORTUNE!

STOP, FOOL! DON'T USE SUCH INAUSPICIOUS WORDS ON SUCH AN AUSPICIOUS DAY! WHAT IS IT? WHAT IS IT?

OH, WHAT A DAY YOU HAVE CHOSEN FOR THE WEDDING! DON'T YOU KNOW? WE ARE IN THE MONTH OF RAMZAAN AND IT IS EKADASHI TODAY

RAMZAAN? EKADASHI? TODAY? OH, NO! NO!

NOW CAN THE MUSSALMANS AND THE HINDUS EAT TODAY?

ALL IS LOST — ALL IS LOST
O WOE!
O MISFORTUNE!

JUST THEN —

WHAT IS IT,
O GHANU?
YOU SEEM
UPSET

NONE OF THE
TWENTY-FIVE
THOUSAND PEOPLE
I EXPECTED TO FEED
WILL COME BECAUSE
OF THE FAST.



DO NOT GRIEVE THE ELDERS
MAY HAVE TO OBSERVE THE
FAST BUT BHAIRUN AND
ARE ONLY CHILDREN WE
CAN BE EXCUSED FROM

YES,
WE WILL
EAT SERVE



AND SO



SIR! SIR THE
HOLY YOUNG ONES
HAVE EATEN ALL
THE FOOD THERE
WAS!

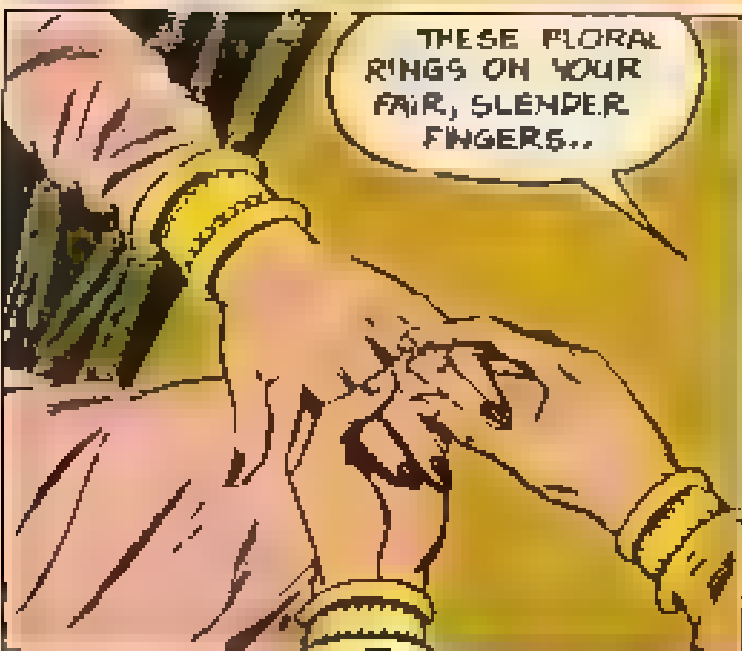
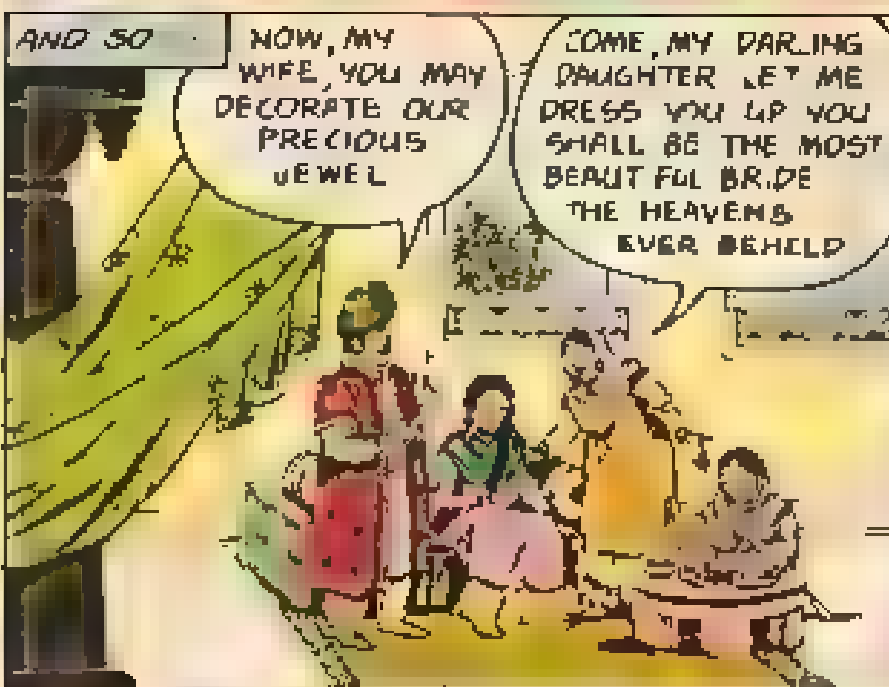
WHAT! FOOD MEANT
FOR TWENTY-FIVE
THOUSAND PEOPLE!




I STILL HAVE
SOME SPACE
LEFT.

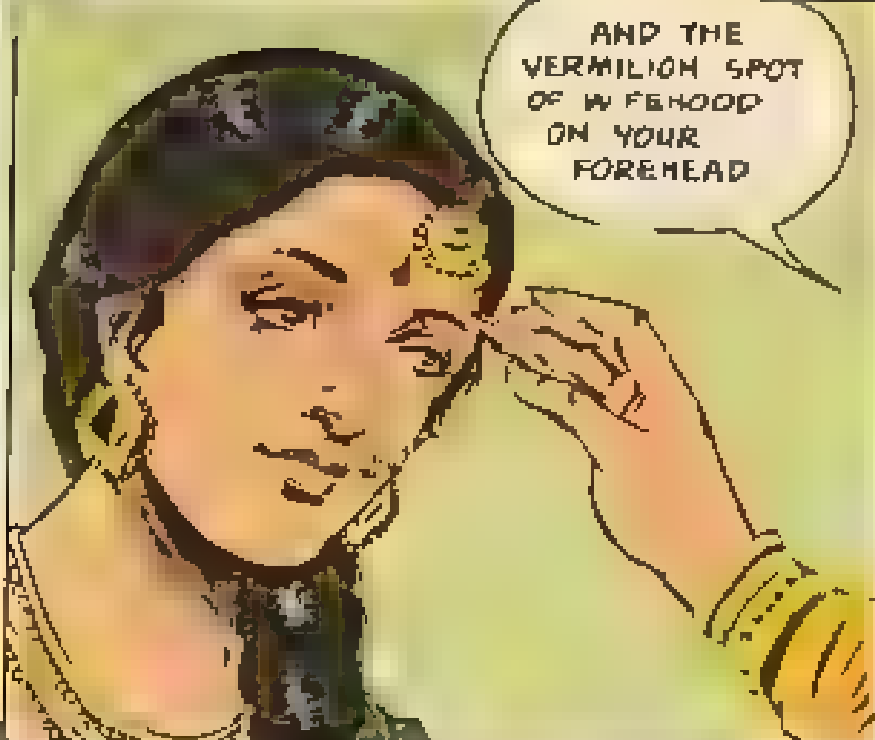
I COULD DO WITH A COUPLE
OF MORE HELPINGS OF
SWEETS, PERHAPS.








THIS GOLDEN
THREAD WITH MOON-
WHITE PEARLS ON
YOUR DELICATE
CHEEK



AND THE
VERMILION SPOT
OF WIFEHOOD
ON YOUR
FOREHEAD

MEANWHILE -

COME MY SON-IN-
LAW COMPETE WITH
ME AND PROVE YOUR
WORTH LET'S SEE
WHICH OF US CAN
SHOOT DOWN THAT
BRASS CUP BALANC-
ED ON THE
SEVEN BAMBOO
POLES



I'LL TRY
FIRST



OH I'VE
MISSED!



O SAKHI, SARWAR, BEFORE
WE START WE WOULD
LIKE TO EAT THE SWEET
PLU FRUIT AND SWEETEN
OUR MUSIC THE MORE
FOR YOU

YES, O SAINT,
GIVE US THE
PLU FRUIT.



BUT THIS IS NOT THE SEASON
FOR IT. SEE, THE TREES ARE
BARE. ASK FOR ANYTHING
ELSE AND I WILL GRANT
IT TO YOU.

WE WANT
THE PLU
FRUIT



OH MY LORD
WHAT SHOULD
I DO ? I DON'T
WISH TO SEE
ANYONE UNHAPPY
ON MY WEDDING
DAY.



AND SUDDENLY—

LOOK! THE PLU TREES
-- LEAVES ARE SPROUT-
ING ON THEM

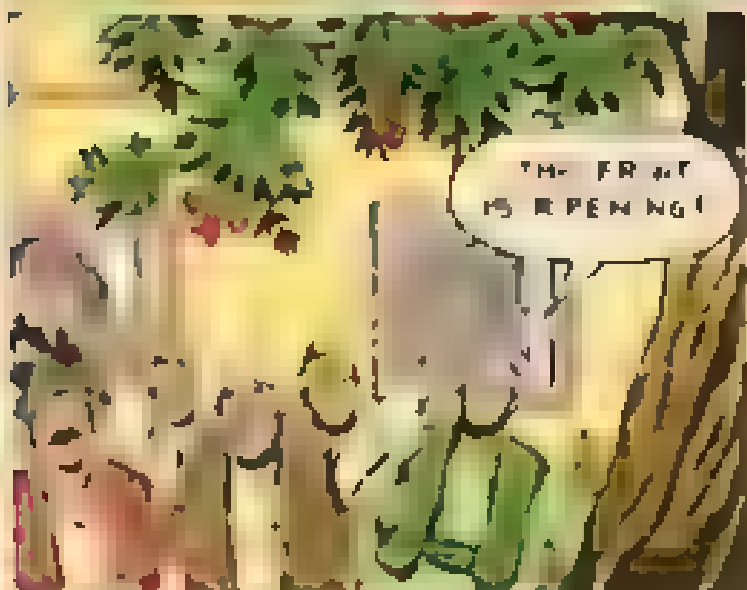


THE TREES ARE
FLOWERING BEFORE
OUR VERY EYES!



THEY ARE
JUST RPE
ENOUGH!

THE FRUIT
IS RPE NG!



EAT! EAT
AND BE
HAPPY!



WOLF
TODAY IS SAINT
SATHI SARWAK'S
WEDDING DAY!

LONG LIVE
SAINT SATHI
SARWAK!




THE THREE BROTHERS LEARNED
THE LESSON AND NEVER AGAIN
TRICKED SAINT SATHI SARWAK

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SWEETNESS GOES
A LONG WAY**



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VALMIKI'S RAMAYANA IS BELIEVED TO BE THE FIRST POETIC WORK WRITTEN IN SANSKRIT; IT IS, THEREFORE, REFERRED TO AS THE ADIKAVYA. IT IS SAID THAT BRAHMA ASSURED VALMIKI THAT "AS LONG AS THE MOUNTAINS STAND AND THE RIVERS FLOW, SO LONG SHALL THE RAMAYANA BE READ BY MEN."

THE IMMORTAL EPIC
OF VALMIKI NOW IN THE
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The Ramayana



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